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Stewart et al.

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(54) **RETAINER AND A RETAINER AND NUT ASSEMBLY**

USPC 411/172-173, 174, 175, 190-191, 517, 411/522-523

See application file for complete search history.

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Continuation of application No. 17/859,090, filed on Jul. 7, 2022, now Pat. No. 11,841,044, which is a division of application No. 16/659,673, filed on Oct. 22, 2019, now Pat. No. 11,415,164.

(60) Provisional application No. 62/786,924, filed on Dec. 31, 2018, provisional application No. 62/749,581, filed on Oct. 23, 2018.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

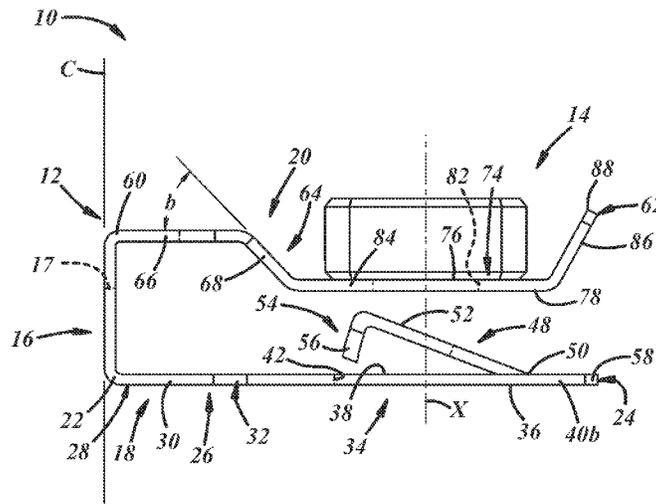
A retainer comprises first and second legs extending away from a base wall. In one embodiment, the first leg includes a dimple array surrounding an aperture and projecting from an inboard surface of the first leg. In another embodiment, the first leg has a necked portion having a set of first shoulders extending away from a first base, and a first apertured portion extending away from the set of first shoulders. The second leg has a necked and stepped portion having a step extending away from a second base, and a shouldered portion extending away from the step and having a set of second shoulders extending laterally outwardly, and a second apertured portion extending away from the second shoulders. The retainer of either embodiment may be coupled to a nut to produce a retainer and nut assembly.

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F16B 37/04 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **F16B 37/044** (2013.01); **F16B 37/04** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC F16B 37/02; F16B 37/04; F16B 37/041; F16B 37/043; F16B 37/044; F16B 37/045; F16B 39/14; Y10S 411/97

16 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets



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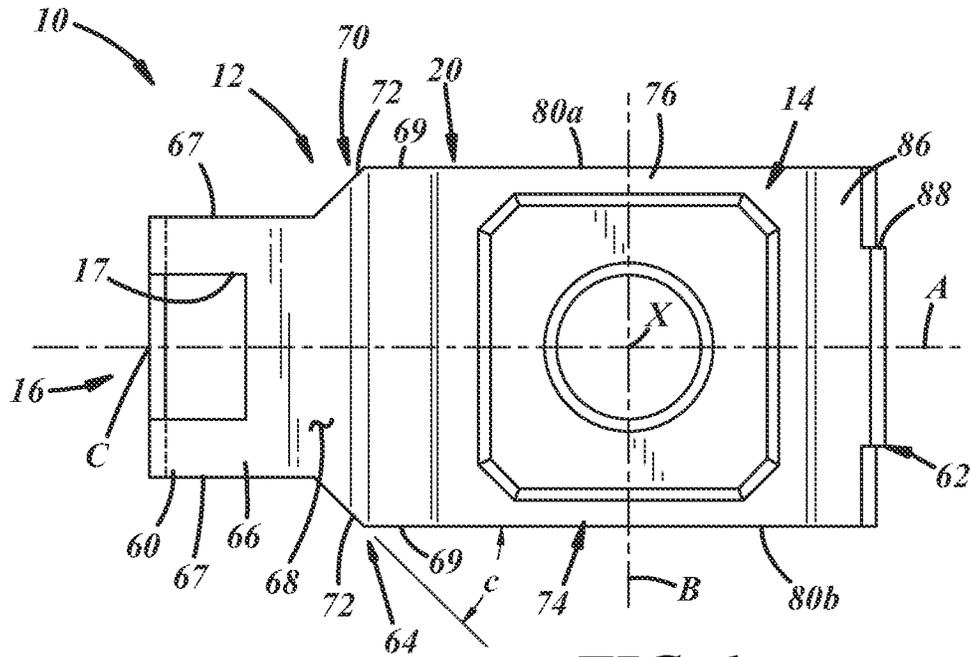


FIG. 1

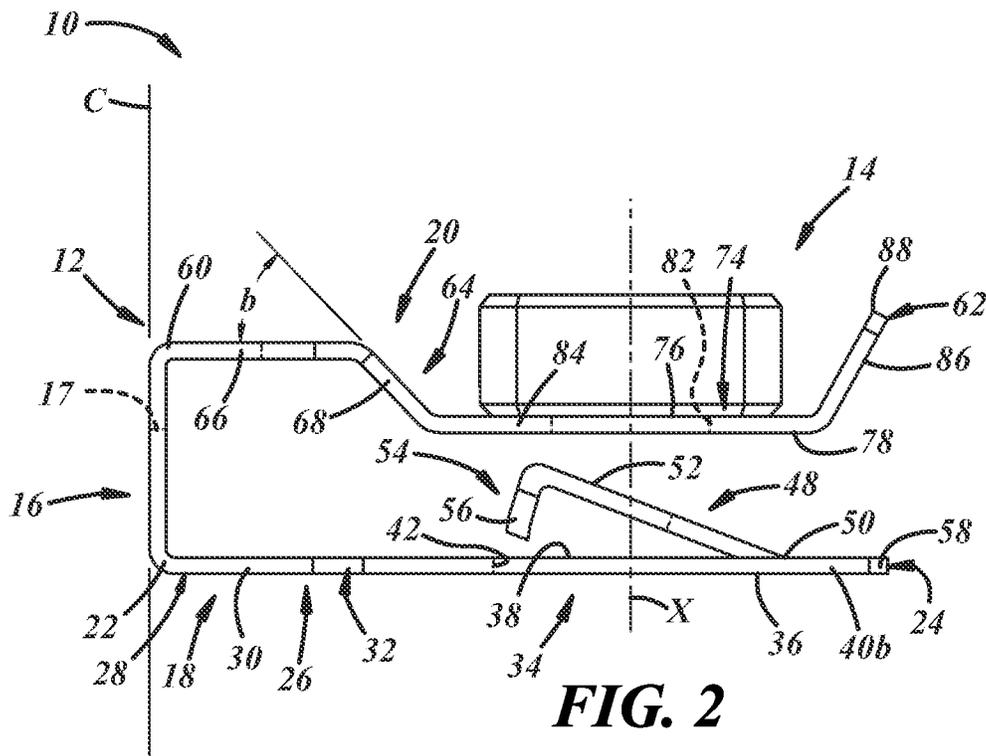


FIG. 2

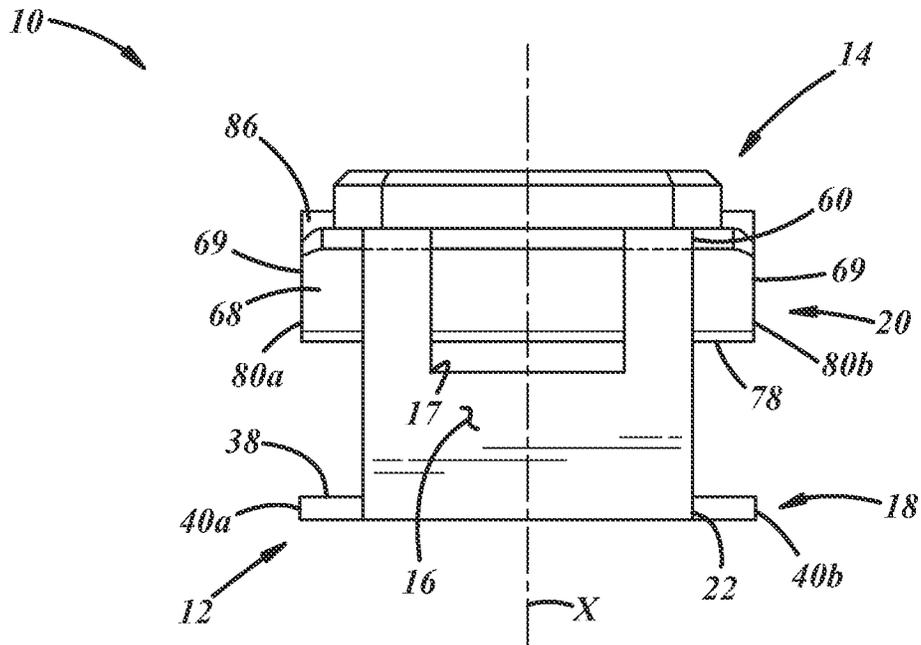


FIG. 3

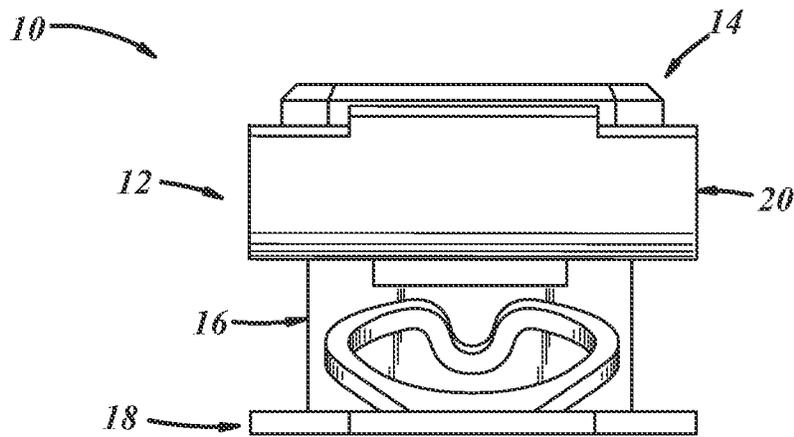
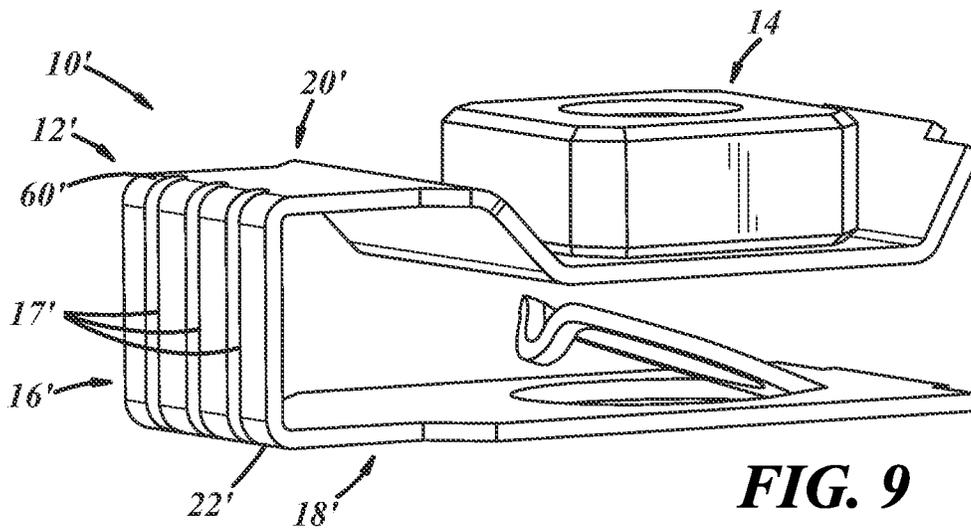
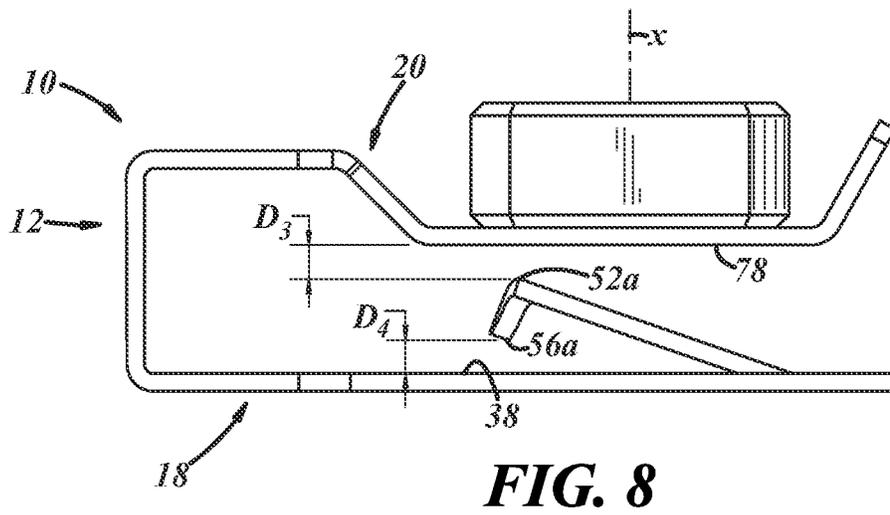
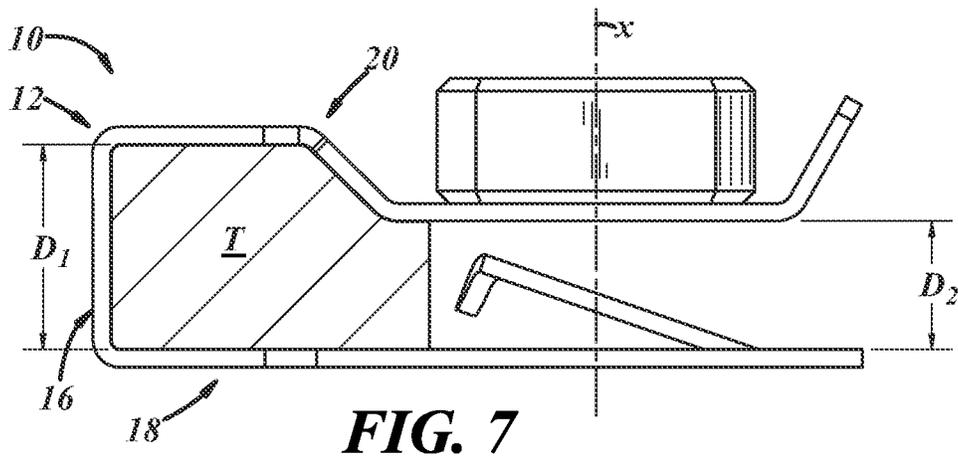


FIG. 4



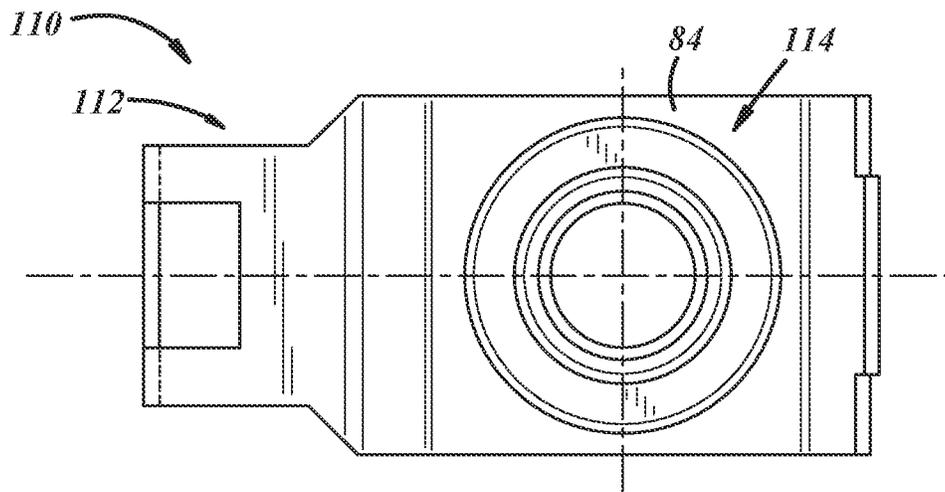


FIG. 10

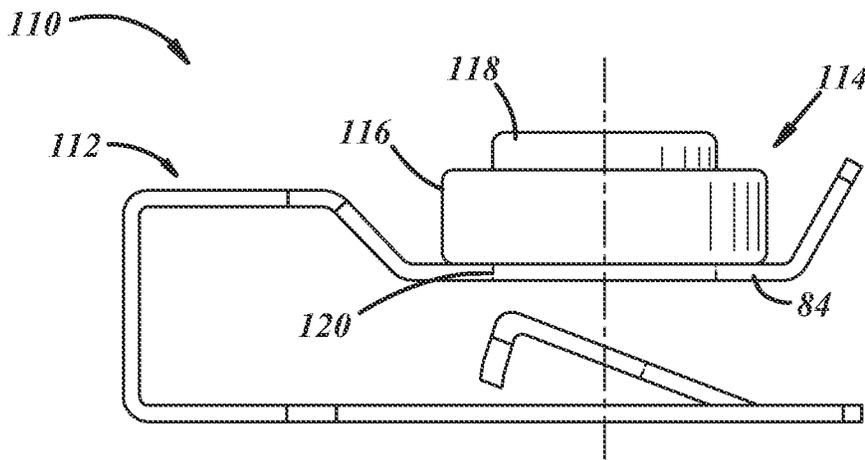


FIG. 11

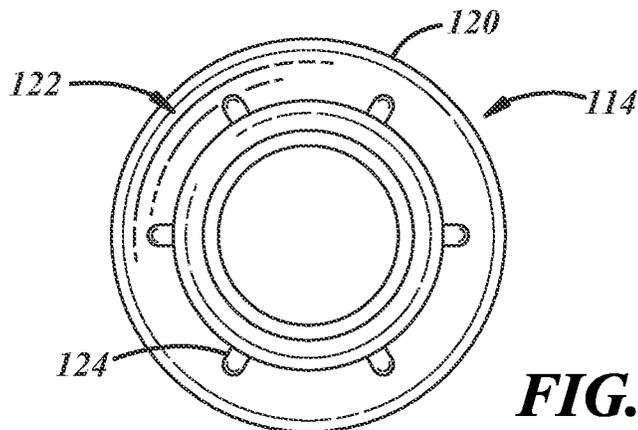
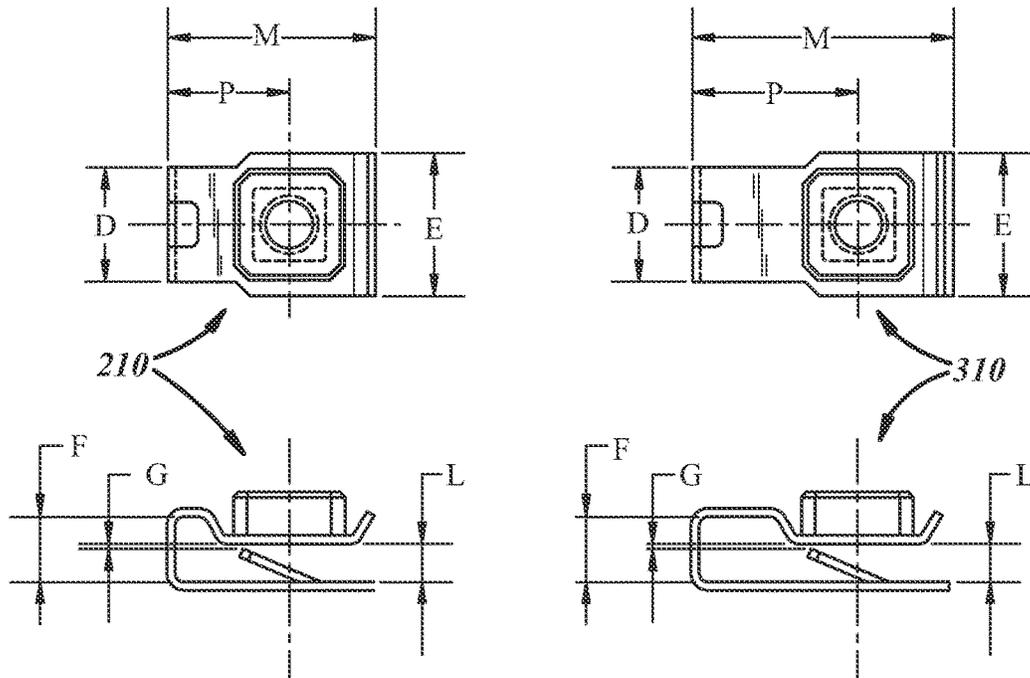


FIG. 12



TYPE	SIZE	MINIMUM TWIST OUT	MINIMUM PUSH OUT	G	F	E	D	M	P	L	PANEL RANGE
SHORT	M4x0.7	6Nm	900N	0.6 MAX	6.5 REF	13.0	10.0	22.0	12.0	3.8	3.8 1.0
						12.7	9.5	21.0	11.5	MAX	
	M5x0.8	9Nm	900N	0.6 MAX	6.5 REF	14.0	10.5	22.0	12.0	3.8	
						13.7	10.0	21.0	11.0	MAX	
	M6x1.0	15Nm	900N	0.6 MAX	6.5 REF	15.0	11.0	24.0	14.0	4.0	4.0 1.2
						14.7	10.5	23.0	13.0	MAX	
	M8x1.25	30Nm	900N	0.6 MAX	6.5 REF	17.0	14.0	25.5	15.0	4.0	
						16.7	13.5	24.5	14.0	MAX	
LONG	M4x0.7	6Nm	900N	0.6 MAX	6.5 REF	13.0	10.0	25.0	14.5	3.8	3.8 1.0
						12.7	9.5	24.0	13.5	MAX	
	M5x0.8	9Nm	900N	0.6 MAX	6.5 REF	14.0	10.5	27.0	17.0	3.8	
						13.7	10.0	26.0	16.0	MAX	
	M6x1.0	15Nm	900N	0.6 MAX	6.5 REF	15.0	11.0	30.0	20.0	4.0	4.0 1.2
						14.7	10.5	29.0	19.0	MAX	
	M8x1.25	30Nm	900N	0.6 MAX	6.5 REF	17.0	14.0	32.0	21.5	4.0	
						16.7	13.5	31.0	20.5	MAX	

FIG. 13

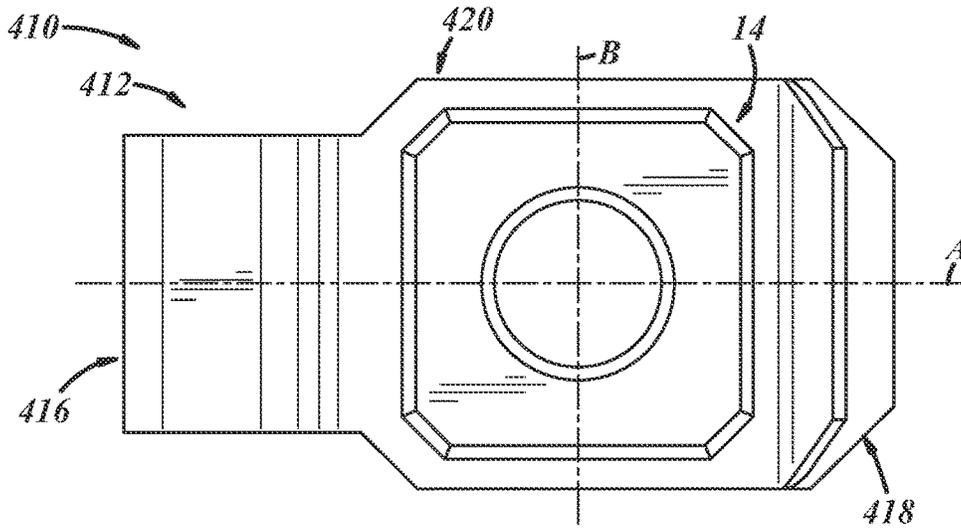


FIG. 14

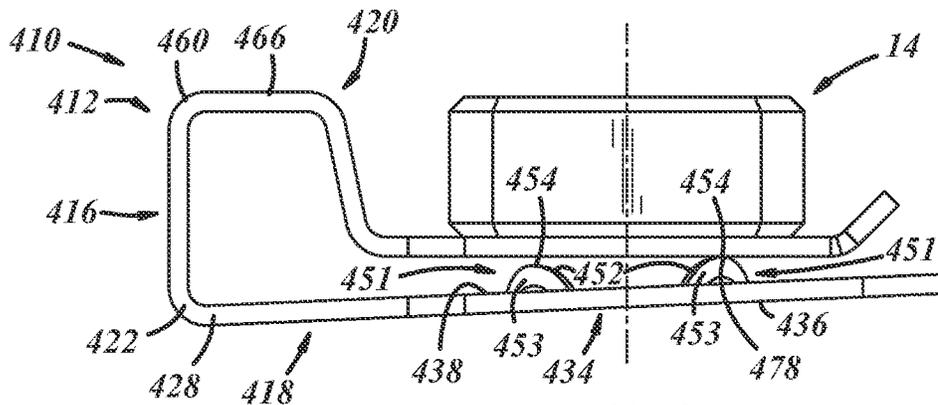


FIG. 15

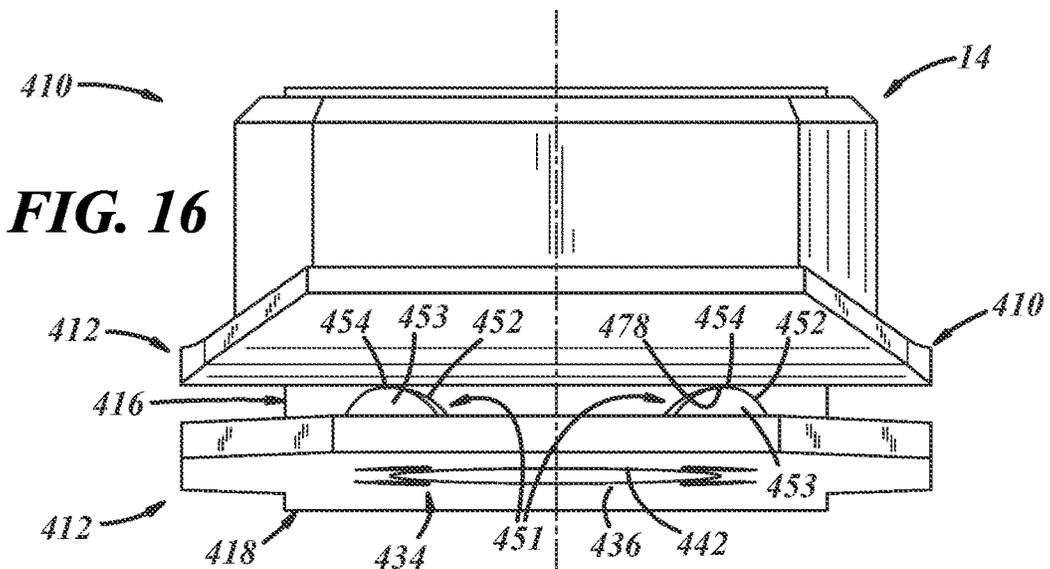


FIG. 16

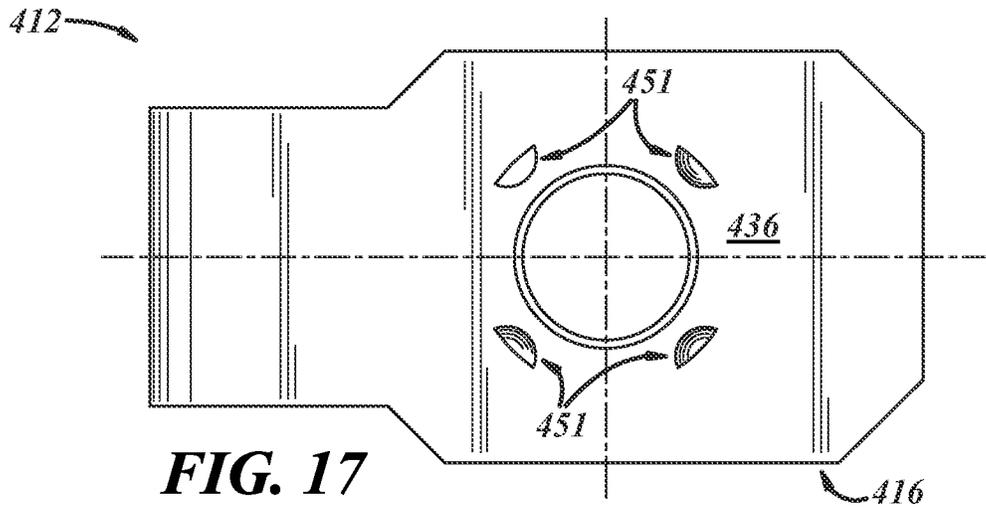


FIG. 17

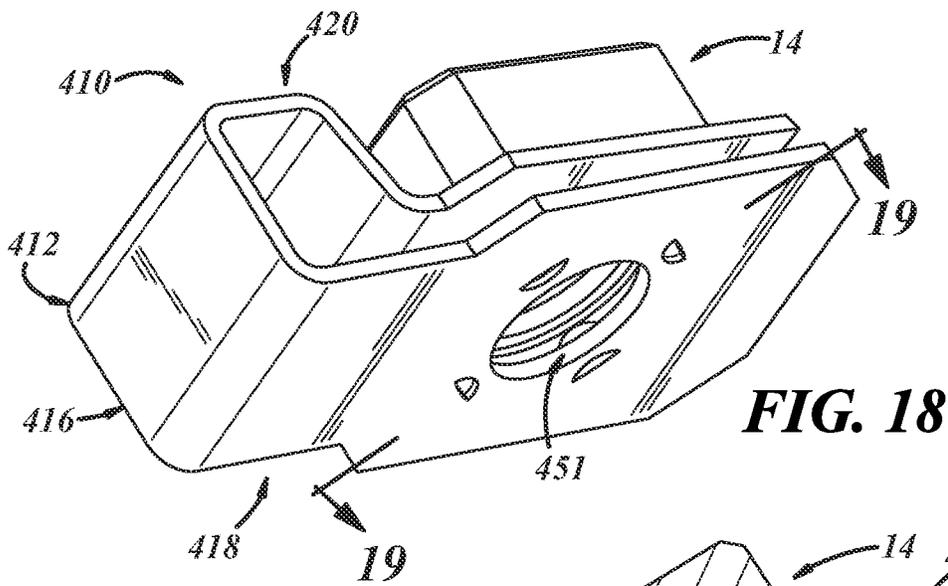


FIG. 18

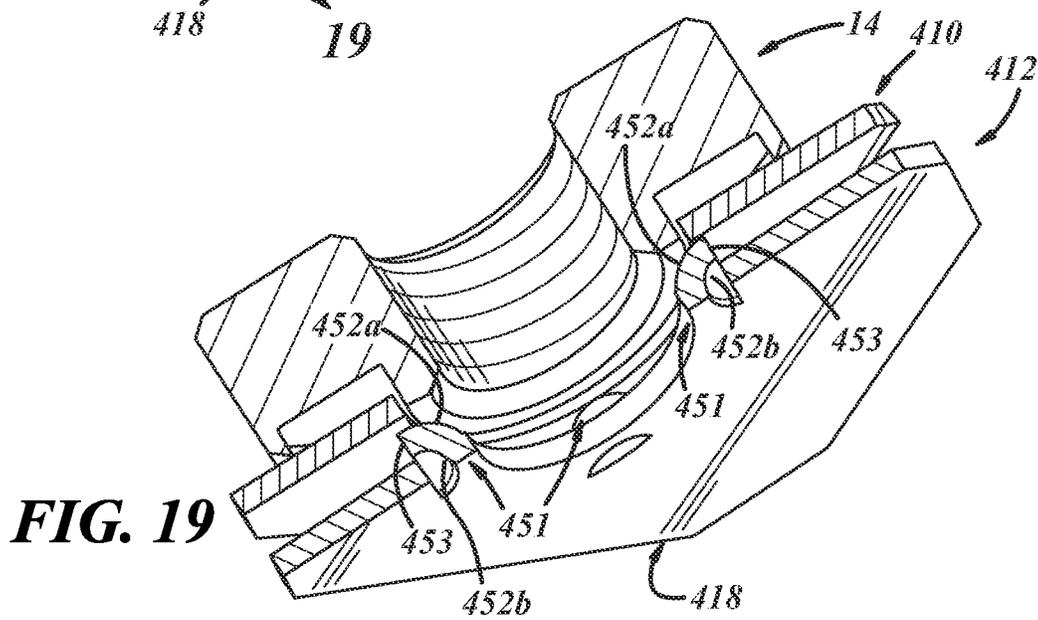
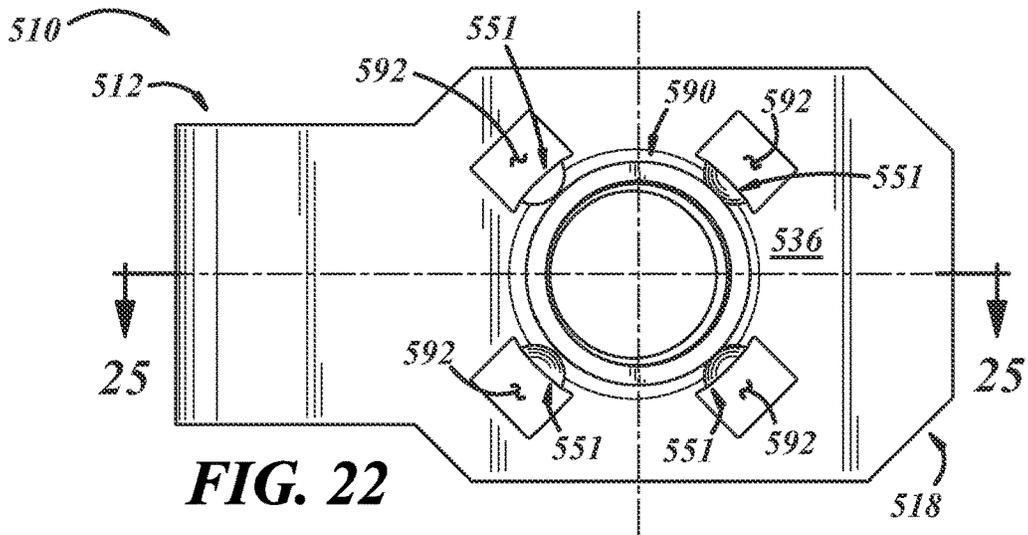
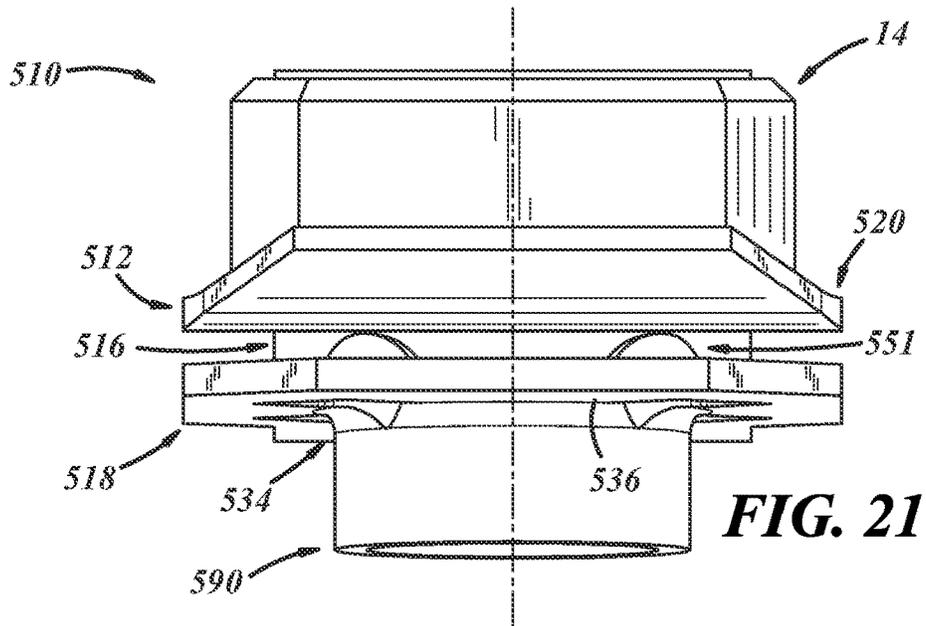
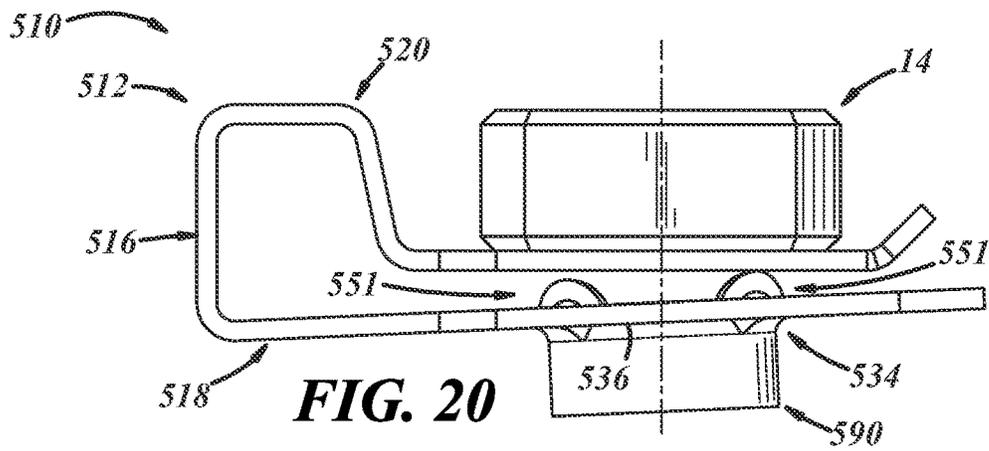
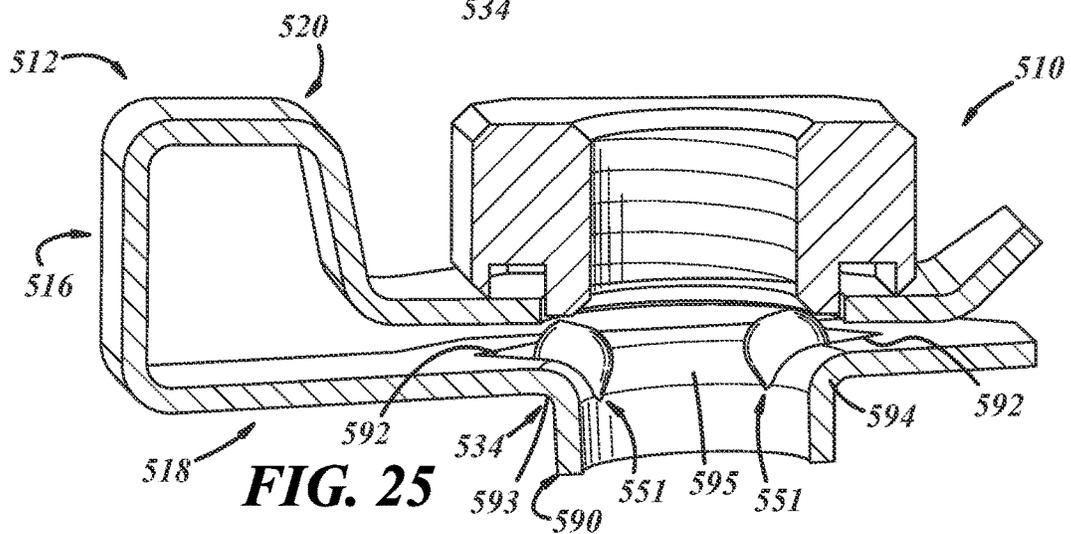
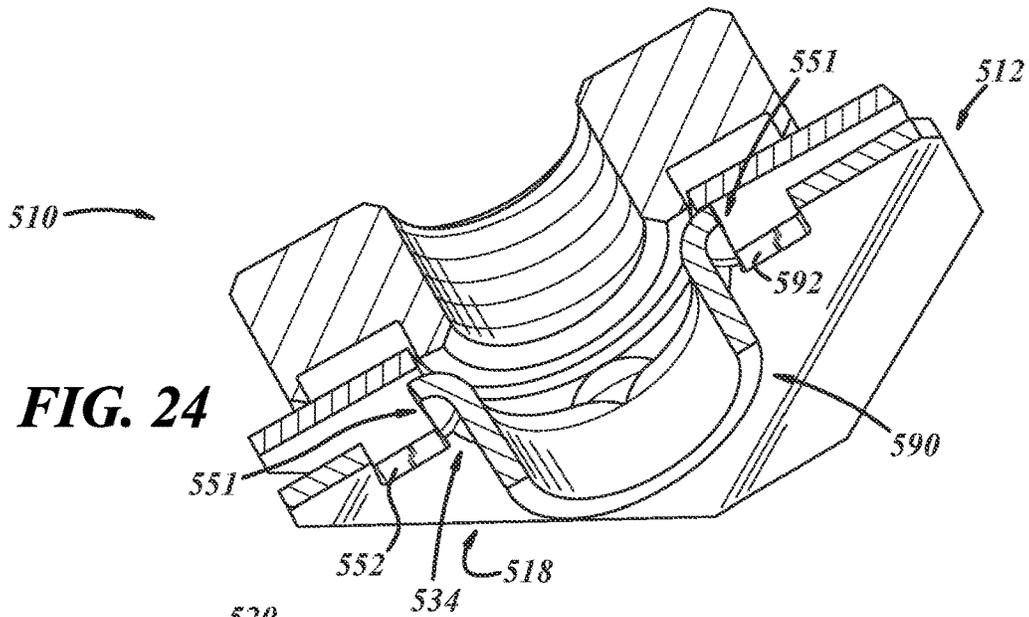
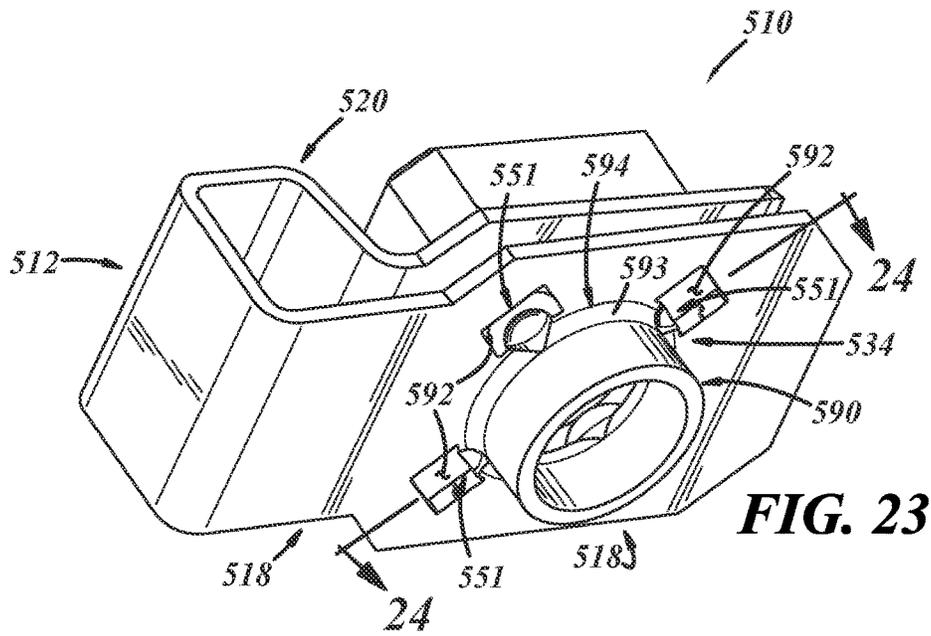


FIG. 19





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RETAINER AND A RETAINER AND NUT ASSEMBLY

TECHNICAL FIELD

This disclosure relates generally to fasteners and, more particularly, to retainers and retainer and nut assemblies.

BACKGROUND

Retainer and nut assemblies typically include a retainer and a nut assembled to the retainer. The retainer usually includes a base wall at a rearward portion of the retainer and first and second legs having fixed ends at the base wall and extending away from the base wall and terminating in free ends at a forward portion of the retainer. The first leg is generally planar along its length, and has a short tab extending away from an inboard surface of the first leg for locating the retainer with respect to a hole of a panel to be inserted between the legs, and also has a first apertured portion with a first aperture to accommodate passage of a threaded fastener. The second leg is generally planar along its length, and has downturned flanges at the free end, and also has a second apertured portion with a second aperture to accommodate passage of the threaded fastener into the nut. The nut is coupled to the second leg of the retainer at the second aperture. An example of such a retainer and nut assembly is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 6,688,825. Although such products are commercially satisfactory, their designs constrain the rate at which they can be produced, sometimes lead to premature failure of bending tooling, may require a relatively high installation force to install on a panel, and/or may not always sufficiently center a retainer with respect to a panel aperture.

SUMMARY

In one embodiment of the present disclosure, a retainer includes first and second legs extending away from a base wall, wherein, the first leg has a first apertured portion including an aperture through the first leg and a dimple array projecting from an inboard surface of the first leg, surrounding the aperture, and including at least three circumferentially spaced dimples, and the second leg has a second apertured portion corresponding to the first apertured portion of the first leg. The retainer may be coupled to a nut to produce a retainer and nut assembly.

In another embodiment of the present disclosure, a retainer comprises a base wall, and first and second legs extending away from the base wall. The first leg has a necked portion extending away from the base wall and having a first base and a set of first shoulders extending away from the first base, and a first apertured portion extending away from the set of first shoulders of the necked portion. The second leg has a necked and stepped portion extending away from the base wall and having a second base, a step extending away from the second base, and a shouldered portion extending away from the step and having a set of second shoulders extending laterally outwardly, and a second apertured portion extending away from the set of second shoulders. The retainer may be coupled to a nut to produce a retainer and nut assembly.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 illustrates a top view of a retainer and nut assembly according to an embodiment of the present disclosure, and including a retainer and a square nut coupled to the retainer;

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FIG. 2 illustrates a side view of the assembly of FIG. 1; FIG. 3 illustrates a rear end view of the assembly of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 illustrates a front end view of the assembly of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5 illustrates a bottom view of the assembly of FIG. 1;

FIG. 6 illustrates an upper perspective view of the assembly of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 7 and 8 illustrate alternate side views of the assembly of FIG. 1;

FIG. 9 illustrates a retainer and nut assembly according to another embodiment of the present disclosure, and including a retainer having a slotted base wall;

FIG. 10 illustrates a top view of a retainer and nut assembly according to another embodiment of the present disclosure, and including a round nut;

FIG. 11 illustrates a side view of the assembly of FIG. 10;

FIG. 12 illustrates an enlarged bottom view of the nut of FIG. 10;

FIG. 13 illustrates a specification diagram for the retainer and nut assembly of the present disclosure;

FIG. 14 illustrates a top view of a retainer and nut assembly according to a further embodiment of the present disclosure, and including a retainer having first leg with a dimple array projecting from an inboard surface of the first leg;

FIG. 15 illustrates a side view of the assembly of FIG. 14;

FIG. 16 illustrates an enlarged front view of the assembly of FIG. 14;

FIG. 17 illustrates a bottom view of the assembly of FIG. 14;

FIG. 18 illustrates a lower perspective view of the assembly of FIG. 14;

FIG. 19 illustrates an enlarged cross-sectional view of the assembly of FIG. 14, taken along line 19-19 of FIG. 18;

FIG. 20 illustrates a side view of a retainer and nut assembly according to an additional embodiment of the present disclosure, and including a retainer having a first leg with a ring projecting from an outboard surface of the first leg and a dimple array surrounding the ring and projecting from an inboard surface of the first leg;

FIG. 21 illustrates an enlarged front view of the assembly of FIG. 20;

FIG. 22 illustrates a bottom view of the assembly of FIG. 20;

FIG. 23 illustrates a lower perspective view of the assembly of FIG. 20;

FIG. 24 illustrates an enlarged cross-sectional view of the assembly of FIG. 20, taken along line 24-24 of FIG. 23; and

FIG. 25 illustrates an enlarged cross-sectional view of the assembly of FIG. 20, taken along line 25-25 of FIG. 22.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

With general reference to the accompanying drawings, a retainer and a retainer and nut assembly are described below. The design of these products may facilitate a faster production rate thereof, promote longer life of bending tooling, provide a reduced installation force to install the products to a panel, and/or reliably center a retainer with respect to a panel aperture.

With reference to FIGS. 1 through 4, a retainer and nut assembly 10 includes a retainer 12 and a nut 14 assembled to the retainer 12.

The nut 14 may be staked, fastened, welded, brazed, adhered, or coupled to the retainer 12 in any other manner

suitable for producing retainer and nut assemblies. The nut 14 may be composed of metal, for instance, steel, more specifically, SAE 1035 steel heat-treated to achieve published property class 10 performance standards. The nut 14 may be a square nut, as illustrated, or may be of round, or any other shape suitable for use with retainer and nut assemblies.

The retainer 12 may be composed of metal, for instance, stainless steel, and may be cold-rolled martensitic steel having a zinc nickel plating and having a thickness of, for example, 0.6 mm to 0.8 mm including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range.

With reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, the retainer 12 includes retainer axes including a longitudinal axis A, a lateral axis B perpendicular to the longitudinal axis A, a transverse axis C transverse to and rearwardly offset from the longitudinal and lateral axes A, B, and a fastening axis X perpendicular to and intersecting the longitudinal and lateral axes A, B. The retainer 12 also includes a base wall 16 at a rearward portion of the retainer 12 and extending along the transverse axis C. The retainer 12 further includes first and second legs 18 (FIG. 2), 20 extending along the longitudinal axis A away from the base wall 16 and terminating at a forward portion of the retainer 12. The base wall 16 and the second leg 20 may be aperture, for example, to include an aperture 17 overlapping corresponding portions of the base wall 16 and the second leg 20.

With reference to FIGS. 2 and 5, the first leg 18 includes a first fixed end 22 at a lower end of the base wall 16, a first free end 24 distal the first fixed end 22, and a necked portion 26 extending away from the first fixed end 22. The necked portion 26 includes a first base 28 extending away from the first fixed end 22 and having straight lateral sides 30, and a set of first shoulders 32 extending away from the first base 28. The first shoulders 32 may be straight-tapered, for example, extending at an angle α between forty and fifty degrees including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range. The first leg 18 also includes a first apertured portion 34 extending in a direction away from the first shoulders 32 of the necked portion 26 toward the first free end 24, and being coplanar with the necked portion 26.

The first apertured portion 34 includes a first outboard surface 36, a first inboard surface 38, first laterally opposite sides 40a, 40b that may be straight and extending between the first outboard and inboard surfaces 36, 38, and a first aperture 42 being disposed between the first laterally opposite sides 40a, 40b and the first outboard and inboard surfaces 36, 38. The first aperture 42 may have a truncated teardrop shape with a teardrop-shaped portion 44 and a truncated portion 46 between the teardrop-shaped portion 44 and the first free end 24. The first apertured portion 34 also may include a hinged tab 48 having a hinged portion 50 connected to the truncated portion 46 of the first aperture 42, and a body 52 extending from the hinged portion 50 in a rearward direction and toward at least one of the base wall 16 or the second leg 20 over a distance that is more than half way across a space between apertured portions of the first and second legs 18, 20 and terminating in a free end 54 with a projection 56 extending back toward the first leg 18. The first apertured portion 34 further may include a tab or tang 58 terminating in the first free end 24.

With reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, the second leg 20 includes a second fixed end 60 at an upper end of the base wall 16, a second free end 62 distal the second fixed end 60, and a necked and stepped portion 64 including a second base 66 extending away from the second fixed end 60 toward the second free end 62. The second base 66 may be planar, and

may have straight lateral sides 67. The necked and stepped portion 64 also may include a step 68 extending away from the second base 66 in a forward direction and toward the first leg 18. The step 68 may have straight lateral sides 69, and may be straight-angled at an angle β between forty and fifty degrees including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range. The necked and stepped portion 64 further may include a shouldered portion 70 extending away from the step 68 and having a set of second shoulders 72 extending laterally outwardly. The shoulders 72 may be straight-tapered at an angle γ between forty and fifty degrees including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range. The second leg 20 also may include a second apertured portion 74 extending away from the second shoulders 72 and toward the second free end 62.

The second apertured portion 74 may have a second outboard surface 76, a second inboard surface 78 facing the first inboard surface 38 of the first leg 18, second laterally opposite sides 80a, 80b that may be straight and extending between the second outboard and inboard surfaces 76, 78, and a second aperture 82 being disposed between the second laterally opposite sides 80 and the second outboard and inboard surfaces 76, 78. The second aperture 82 may be round or of any other shape suitable for coupling to a nut. The second inboard surface 78 may have an indented portion 84.

The nut 14 may be coupled to the second leg 20 of the retainer 12 at the second aperture 82 and cooperating with the indented portion 84 to couple the retainer 12 to the nut 14. In one example, the indented portion 84 may be part of the second apertured portion 74 that has been staked, pressed, or otherwise formed to a corresponding portion of the nut 14. In any case, the surface 78 may be planar such that the nut-to-retainer connection does not project beyond the surface 78 and into the space between the legs 18, 20 to allow for smooth insertion over a panel (not shown).

The second leg 20 also may have a flange 86 extending away from the second apertured portion 74 in an outboard direction. The flange 86 is angled with respect to the second apertured portion 74 at an angle between fifty-five and sixty degrees including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range. The flange 86 may have a tab or tang 88 that terminates in the second free end 62.

With reference to FIG. 6, the tangs 58, 88 may facilitate separation of a series of retainer blanks from a strip of metal. The tangs 58, 88 may be rectangular and have a width that is less than the overall width of the retainer 12, but greater than or equal to a minimum width necessary to connect serial retainer blanks without bending/buckling of the strip when the strip is advanced through a forming machine. Preferably, the width of each tang 58, 88 is less than the width of the base wall 16 of the retainer 12. The length of the tangs 58, 88 may be 0.015" to 0.045" including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range. The tangs 58, 88 enable a clean cutoff of each retainer 12 from its neighboring retainer in the metal strip, yet allow some variation in cut location from part to part. Also, locating the cutoffs across the narrower tangs 58, 88, instead of across the entire width of the metal strip from which the retainers 12 are formed, facilitates breaking sharp edges/corners using a radius or angle cut. To carry out the radius or angle cut without the tangs 58, 88 would require cutoff scrap where nose and tail are of differing shapes. Thus, the tang design allows for a simple scrapless cutoff for reduction of material waste.

With reference to FIG. 7, the retainer 12 may be hump-backed. In general, a distance between the legs 18, 20 at a

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rearward portion of the retainer **12** may be significantly greater than a distance between the legs **18**, **20** at a forward portion of the retainer **12**, wherein the distances are measured parallel to the fastening axis X. More specifically, a distance D_1 between the first and second bases **28**, **66** may be significantly greater than a distance D_2 between the first and second apertured portions **34**, **74**, wherein the distances D_1 , D_2 are measured parallel to the fastening axis X. The humpbacked design facilitates use of a center form tool T, over which the retainer **12** is bent into shape, that is larger than it would otherwise be without the humpback. The larger center form tool T may be helpful in providing additional mass and size that may be useful in withstanding high forces applied in bending the retainer **12** into shape from flat stock. Accordingly, useful life of the center form tool T may be extended.

The humpback design, being more square and less oblong compared to prior art designs, provides a useful feature. The more square-like base wall **16** can be pushed onto a panel (not shown) until an inboard surface of the base wall **16** fully contacts a panel edge (not shown). This allows for very quick and consistent installation of the assembly **10**. The more oblong-shaped base wall of prior art retainers may not engage a panel edge squarely and securely, because the panel edge may engage at various points of contact along radii of bends between the base wall and the legs. The more square-like base wall **16** of the present disclosure provides a large, strong and solid contact patch against a panel edge for greater resistance to retainer assembly twist failure during assembly operations. Again, the prior art oblong base wall tends to be inferior in that all the assembly forces are localized because the parts engage only at point of contact along the radii, thereby leaving the oblong base wall more likely to be damaged, twisted, deformed, or fractured during assembly rundown.

With reference to FIG. **8**, a distance D_3 between an uppermost or inboard surface **52a** of the hinged tab **48** of the first leg **18** and a lowermost or inboard surface **78** of the apertured portion **74** of the second leg **20** may be less than a minimum thickness of a panel (not shown) to which the retainer **12** is to be coupled. Likewise, a distance D_4 between a lowermost or outboard surface **56a** of the projection **56** of the hinged tab **48** and an uppermost or inboard surface **38** of the apertured portion **34** of the first leg **18** may be less than a minimum thickness of a panel (not shown) to which the retainer **12** is to be coupled. The distances D_3 , D_4 are measured parallel to the fastening axis X.

FIG. **9** shows another illustrative embodiment of a retainer and nut assembly **10'**. This embodiment is similar in many respects to the embodiment of FIGS. **1** through **8** and like numerals between the embodiments generally designate like or corresponding elements throughout the several views of the drawing figures. Accordingly, the descriptions of the embodiments are hereby incorporated into one another, and description of subject matter common to the embodiments generally may not be repeated.

With reference to FIG. **9**, the assembly **10'** includes a retainer **12'** including a base wall **16'** having one or more slots **17'**. Each slot **17'** may extend lengthwise in a general direction from one end of the base wall **16'** to another. The slots **17'** may extend from a first leg **18'** to a second leg **20'** through bends or fixed ends **22'**, **60'** of the legs **18'**, **20'**, as illustrated. In other embodiments, the slots **17'** may extend through one or the other of the two bends **22'**, **60'**, and/or not necessarily over the entire height of the base wall **16'**. In still other embodiments, each slot **17'** need not be continuous and may be interrupted over its length. Each slot **17'** may have

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a width, and a height/length that is greater than the width. The width of any given individual slot **17'** may be between 0.050" and 0.150" including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range. More specifically, the width of any given individual slot **17'** may be between 0.060" and 0.125" including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range. Similarly, the width of any given solid portion of the base wall **16'** between the slots **17'** may be between 0.060" and 0.125". The collective width of the slots **17'** may be between 25% and 75% (including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range) relative to the total width of the base wall **16'**.

The slots **17'** may provide a comb-like base wall **16'**. In one example, in some embodiments, the slots **17'** may be arranged to be of the same length, same longitudinal position, same width, and/or same lateral spacing. In another example, in other embodiments, the slots **17'** may be arranged to be of different lengths, different longitudinal positions, different widths, and/or different lateral spacing.

The comb-like configuration of the base wall **16'** may help uniformly distribute forming/bending forces across a center form tool and lower forces needed to form the part generally. More specifically, the slots **17'** may be useful in reducing the forces required to bend the retainer **12'** into shape over a center forming tool, particularly when the retainer **12'** is composed of preheat-treated steel (e.g., M130, M160, etc.). Also, the slotted base wall **16'** may act as an anti-rotation feature when a bolt (not shown) is threaded into the nut **14**, wherein as fastening forces build up, the slots **17'** close up to increase twist resistance without having to increase part weight. Additionally, the slots **17'** may result in lower installation forces used to install the assembly **10'** to a panel (not shown) by allowing flexure of the retainer **12'**. Furthermore, the slots **17'** may be more ergonomically correct than a single large rectangular aperture. One example of such an ergonomic benefit regarding the comb-like cut out structure is that the assembly **10'** may be installed to a panel even with oily or greasy fingers of someone who is installing the assembly **10'** to the panel. This is because the narrow slots **17'** provide a good traction surface, and excess oil or grease from an installer's fingers is given an escape path through the slots **17'**, assuring that the oil/grease will not become trapped between the assembly **10'** and the installer's finger and, thus, will not lead to slippage between the installer's finger and the assembly **10'**.

FIGS. **10** through **12** show another illustrative embodiment of a retainer and nut assembly **110**. This embodiment is similar in many respects to the embodiment of FIGS. **1** through **9** and like numerals between the embodiments generally designate like or corresponding elements throughout the several views of the drawing figures. Accordingly, the descriptions of the embodiments are hereby incorporated into one another, and description of subject matter common to the embodiments generally may not be repeated.

With reference to FIGS. **10** through **12**, a retainer and nut assembly **110** includes a round nut **114** that may include a collar **116**, a free end boss **118** extending from the collar **116**, and a fixed end boss **120** extending from the collar **116** in a direction opposite that of the free end boss **118**. The nut **114** also may include a circumferentially extending recess or channel **122** in an undersurface of the collar **116** to accept the indented portion **84** of the retainer **12** when the retainer **12** is staked to the nut **114**, and radially extending ribs **124** in the channel **122** to cooperate with the indented portion **84** of the retainer **12** to resist rotation of the nut **114** with respect to the retainer **12**.

The nut **14**, **114** whether square or round, may be a low-profile, self-piercing nut that is easily automated for faster nut delivery speeds into a production die. Such nuts need only be oriented to prevent an upside-down condition and are not prone to tipping over inside an orientation section of an automation system. Such nut styles do not require the complicated orientation automation that hexagonal flange nuts do. The nut **14**, **114** is attached by packing corresponding retainer material from the indented portion **84** into the recess or channel **122** on the bottom of the nut **14**, **114** and flaring out the tubular collar **116** of the nut **14**, **114** for retention of the nut **14**, **114** to the retainer material. This flared collar attachment can be applied much faster and with a much shorter machine stroke than shaved metal staking along the length of a hexagonal flange nut's hexagonal corners. The short flared collar attachment and low profile of the nut **14**, **114** allows for minimal strip lift in a production die. A top leading edge of the low-profile nut **14**, **114** presents a smooth flat chamfered edge that is easier to push through the production tooling very quickly without catching and buckling the part strip. The low strip lift and smooth chamfered nut edge allows production of the assembly **10** at much faster speeds than a hexagonal flange nut.

Notably, the presently disclosed retainer **12** need not include an apertured base wall **16**, or, more specifically, the illustrated aperture **17** overlapping portions of the base wall **16** and the second leg **18**. Also notably, the presently disclosed retainer **12** need not include a downturned flange, more specifically, the second leg **20** of the retainer **12** need not include any downturned flange(s) at the free end thereof and/or at lateral sides thereof.

FIG. **13** illustrates a specification diagram including short and long versions **210**, **310** of a retainer and nut assembly with various relevant dimensions in millimeters. The present disclosure includes a tolerance range around feature dimensions of plus or minus ten percent including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that tolerance range.

The present disclosure includes any and all ratios or proportions between dimensions of any and all features of the disclosed retainer and nut assemblies **10**, **10'**, **110**, **210**, **310**. For example, the present disclosure includes F/D, F/L, D/E, and any other ratios or proportions. Likewise, the present disclosure includes a tolerance range around such ratios or proportions of plus or minus ten percent including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that tolerance range.

A ratio between the height F of the base wall to the width D of the base wall may be between 0.62 and 0.92 including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range.

A ratio between the height F of the base wall and a height L of a space between the apertured portions of the legs may be between 1.4 and 2.0 including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range.

A ratio between the width D of the base wall and the width E of the free ends of the legs may be between 0.5 and 1.2 including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range.

FIGS. **14** through **19** show another illustrative embodiment of a retainer and nut assembly **410**. This embodiment is similar in many respects to the embodiment of FIGS. **1** through **13** and like numerals between the embodiments generally designate like or corresponding elements throughout the several views of the drawing figures. Accordingly, the descriptions of the embodiments are hereby incorporated into one another, and description of subject matter common to the embodiments generally may not be repeated.

With reference to FIGS. **14** through **16**, the retainer and nut assembly **410** includes a retainer **412** and the nut **14** assembled to the retainer **412**. The retainer includes a base wall **416**, and first and second legs **418**, **420** extending away from the base wall **416**.

With reference to FIGS. **15** and **16**, the first leg **418** includes a first apertured portion **434** including a first outboard surface **436**, a first inboard surface **438** (FIG. **15**), and a first aperture **442** (FIG. **16**) being disposed between the first outboard and inboard surfaces **436**, **438**. The first apertured portion **434** also includes a dimple array including a plurality of dimples **451** projecting from the inboard surface **438** of the first leg **418**, surrounding the first aperture **442**. The dimple array includes at least three dimples **451** and, as illustrated, may include four dimples **451**. The dimples **451** may be equidistantly circumferentially spaced apart from one another. Also, two of the illustrated four dimples **451** may be disposed on one side of the longitudinal axis A (FIG. **14**) and the other two of the four dimples **451** may be disposed on another side of the longitudinal axis A, such that the longitudinal axis A does not intersect any one dimple. Likewise, two of the four dimples **451** may be disposed on one side of the lateral axis B (FIG. **14**) and the other two of the four dimples **451** may be disposed on another side of the lateral axis B, such that the lateral axis B does not intersect any one dimple.

The dimples **451** may terminate in free ends **454**. The free end **454** of at least one of the dimples **451** may contact a corresponding portion of an inboard surface **478** of the second leg **420**. Accordingly, as illustrated in FIG. **15**, an angle between the base wall **416** and the first leg **418** may be acute, i.e., less than ninety degrees, for example, between 85 and 89.9 degrees including all ranges, sub-ranges, endpoints, and values in that range.

With reference to FIGS. **17** through **19**, the dimples **451** may be shell-shaped. More specifically, the dimples **451** may be quarter-spherical-shaped. For example, the dimples **451** may be formed with a dimple punch and die in a forming machine. Accordingly, the dimples **451** may be projections displaced from the first leg **418**. In any case, the dimples **451** may include rounded bodies **452** of curvate shape, with excurvate inboard surfaces **452a** (FIG. **19**) facing radially inwardly, corresponding incurvate outboard surfaces **452b** (FIG. **19**) facing radially outwardly, and faces **453** facing radially outwardly.

The dimples **451** provide reliable assembling, centering, and locating of the retainer **412** with respect to a corresponding aperture in a panel to which the retainer **412** is to be coupled. In particular, the rounded or excurvate shape of the bodies **452** of the dimples **451** help to introduce the dimples **451** within the corresponding panel aperture as the retainer **412** is being assembled to the panel, and help keep the dimples **451** centered within the panel aperture for maintaining good location of the retainer **412** with respect to the panel.

FIGS. **20** through **25** show another illustrative embodiment of a retainer and nut assembly **510**. This embodiment is similar in many respects to the embodiment of FIGS. **1** through **19** and like numerals between the embodiments generally designate like or corresponding elements throughout the several views of the drawing figures. Accordingly, the descriptions of the embodiments are hereby incorporated into one another, and description of subject matter common to the embodiments generally may not be repeated.

With reference to FIGS. **20** and **21**, the retainer and nut assembly **510** includes a retainer **512** and the nut **14** assembled to the retainer **512**. The retainer includes a base

wall 516, and first and second legs 518, 520 extending away from the base wall 516. With additional reference to FIG. 22, the first leg 518 includes an apertured portion 534 including a dimple array projecting from an inboard surface of the first leg 518 with a plurality of dimples 551, and a ring 590 projecting in an outboard direction away from an outboard surface 536 of the apertured portion 534. The ring 590 may have a length that is several times greater than the wall thickness of the apertured portion 534 of the first leg 518.

With reference to FIG. 22, because the long ring 590 may render it difficult to produce the dimples 551, the apertured portion 534 also includes a cutout array corresponding to the dimple array, and including a plurality of cutouts 592 corresponding to the plurality of dimples 551. In one example, the cutouts 592 may be formed with a cutout punch and die in a forming machine and, once the cutouts 592 are formed, then the dimples 551 may be formed with a dimple punch and die in the forming machine.

With reference to FIGS. 23 through 25, the dimples 551 may be produced using material from the first leg 518 located radially between radially inner edges of the cutouts 592 and the ring 590. Accordingly, portions of the dimples 551 may intersect a rounded transition 594 between the apertured portion 534 of the first leg 518 and the ring 590. As shown in FIG. 23, portions of the dimples 551 may intersect an incurvate surface 593 of the rounded transition 594. As shown in FIG. 25, portions of the dimples 551 may intersect an excurve surface 595 of the rounded transition 594.

As used in this patent application, the terminology “for example,” “for instance,” “like,” “such as,” “comprising,” “having,” “including,” and the like, when used with a listing of one or more elements, is open-ended, meaning that the listing does not exclude additional elements. Likewise, when preceding an element, the articles “a,” “an,” “the,” and “said” mean that there are one or more of the elements. Moreover, directional words such as front, rear, top, bottom, upper, lower, radial, circumferential, axial, lateral, longitudinal, vertical, horizontal, transverse, and/or the like are employed by way of example and not limitation. As used herein, the term “may” is an expedient merely to indicate optionality, for instance, of an element, feature, or other thing, and cannot be reasonably construed as rendering indefinite any disclosure herein. Other terms are to be interpreted and construed in the broadest reasonable manner in accordance with their ordinary and customary meaning in the art, unless the terms are used in a context that requires a different interpretation.

Finally, the present disclosure is not a definitive presentation of an invention claimed in this patent application, but is merely a presentation of examples of illustrative embodiments of the claimed invention. More specifically, the present disclosure sets forth one or more examples that are not limitations on the scope of the claimed invention or on terminology used in the accompanying claims, except where terminology is expressly defined herein. And although the present disclosure sets forth a limited number of examples, many other examples may exist now or are yet to be discovered and, thus, it is neither intended nor possible to disclose all possible manifestations of the claimed invention. In fact, various equivalents will become apparent to artisans of ordinary skill in view of the present disclosure and will fall within the spirit and broad scope of the accompanying claims. Features of various implementing embodiments may be combined to form further embodiments of the invention. Therefore, the claimed invention is not limited to the par-

ticular examples of illustrative embodiments disclosed herein but, instead, is defined by the accompanying claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A retainer, comprising:

a base wall, and

first and second legs extending away from the base wall, wherein,

the first leg has:

a necked portion extending away from the base wall and having

a first base, and

a set of first shoulders extending away from the first base, and

a first apertured portion extending away from the set of first shoulders of the necked portion, and

the second leg has:

a necked and stepped portion extending away from the base wall, and having

a second base,

a step extending away from the second base, and a shouldered portion extending away from the step

and having a set of second shoulders extending laterally outwardly, and

a second apertured portion extending away from the set of second shoulders.

2. The retainer set forth in claim 1, wherein the first leg also has a hinged tab having a hinged portion, and a body extending from the hinged portion in a rearward direction and toward at least one of the base wall or the second leg over a distance that is more than half way across a space between the apertured portions of the first and second legs and terminating in a free end.

3. The retainer and nut assembly set forth in claim 2, wherein a distance between an inboard surface of the hinged tab and an inboard surface of the apertured portion of the second leg is less than a minimum thickness of a panel to which the retainer is configured to be coupled, and a distance between an outboard surface of a projection of the hinged tab and an inboard surface of the apertured portion of the first leg is less than a minimum thickness of the panel.

4. The retainer set forth in claim 1, wherein a ratio between a height of the base wall to a width of the base wall is between 0.62 and 0.92.

5. The retainer set forth in claim 1, wherein a ratio between a height of the base wall and a height of a space between the apertured portions of the legs is between 1.4 and 2.0.

6. The retainer set forth in claim 1, wherein a ratio between a width of the base wall and a width of the free ends of the legs is between 0.5 and 1.2.

7. The retainer set forth in claim 1, wherein the second leg is humpbacked at a rearward portion thereof.

8. The retainer set forth in claim 1, wherein the base wall has one or more slots therein.

9. The retainer set forth in claim 1, wherein at least one bend between the base wall and the legs has one or more slots therein.

10. The retainer set forth in claim 1, wherein the first and second legs terminate in free ends established by tangs.

11. The retainer set forth in claim 1, wherein the second base is planar.

12. The retainer set forth in claim 1,

wherein the base wall is located at a rearward portion of the retainer and the first and second legs terminate at a forward portion of the retainer,

wherein the first leg has a first fixed end at the base wall, and a first free end distal the first fixed end,

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wherein the necked portion extends away from the first fixed end,

wherein the first apertured portion extends toward the first free end and has a first outboard surface, a first inboard surface, first laterally opposite sides extending between the first outboard and inboard surfaces, and a first aperture being disposed between the first laterally opposite sides and the first outboard and inboard surfaces,

wherein the second leg has a second fixed end at the base wall and a second free end distal the second fixed end, and the second base of the necked and stepped portion extends away from the second fixed end toward the second free end, and the step of the necked and stepped portion extends in a forward direction and toward the first leg, and

wherein the second apertured portion extends toward the free end and has a second outboard surface, a second inboard surface facing the first inboard surface, second laterally opposite sides extending between the second outboard and inboard surfaces, and a second aperture being disposed between the second laterally opposite sides and the second outboard and inboard surfaces.

13. The retainer set forth in claim 12, also including retainer axes including a longitudinal axis, a lateral axis perpendicular to the longitudinal axis, a transverse axis transverse to the longitudinal and lateral axes, and a fastening axis perpendicular to the longitudinal and lateral axes,

wherein the base wall predominantly extends along the transverse axis,

wherein the first and second legs predominantly extend along the longitudinal axis,

wherein the first base extends away from the first fixed end and has straight lateral sides,

wherein the set of first shoulders is straight-tapered at an angle between 40 and 50 degrees,

wherein the first apertured portion is coplanar with the necked portion,

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wherein the first aperture has a truncated teardrop shape with a teardrop-shaped portion and a truncated portion between the teardrop-shaped portion and the first free end,

wherein the first apertured portion also includes a hinged tab having a hinged portion connected to the truncated portion of the first aperture, and a body extending from the hinged portion in a rearward direction and toward at least one of the base wall or the second leg over a distance that is more than half way across a space between the apertured portions of the first and second legs and terminating in a free end with a projection extending back toward the first leg, and a tang terminating in the first free end,

wherein the second base has straight lateral sides, wherein the step of the necked and stepped portion has straight lateral sides disposed at an angle between 40 and 50 degrees,

wherein the set of second shoulders are straight-tapered at an angle between 40 and 50 degrees,

wherein the second inboard surface has an indented portion, and

wherein the second leg also has a flange extending away from the second apertured portion in an outboard direction.

14. A retainer and nut assembly, comprising: the retainer set forth in claim 1, and a nut coupled to the second leg of the retainer.

15. The retainer and nut assembly set forth in claim 14, wherein the nut is a square nut.

16. The retainer and nut assembly set forth in claim 14, wherein the nut is a round nut, having a collar, a free end boss extending from the collar, a fixed end boss extending from the collar in a direction opposite that of the free end boss, a circumferentially extending channel in an undersurface of the collar to accept the indented portion when the retainer is staked to the nut and radially extending ribs in the channel to cooperate with the indented portion to resist rotation of the nut with respect to the retainer.

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